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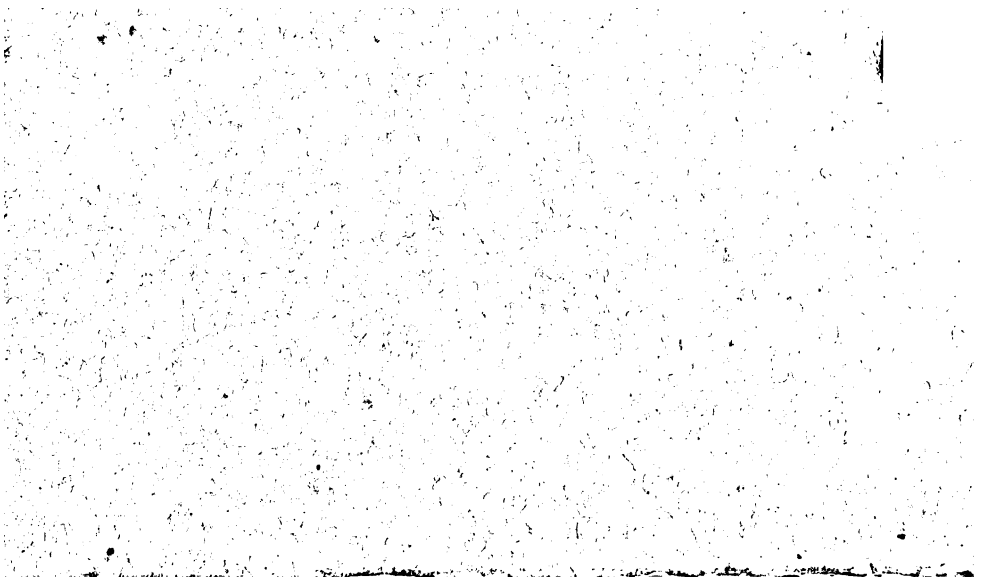

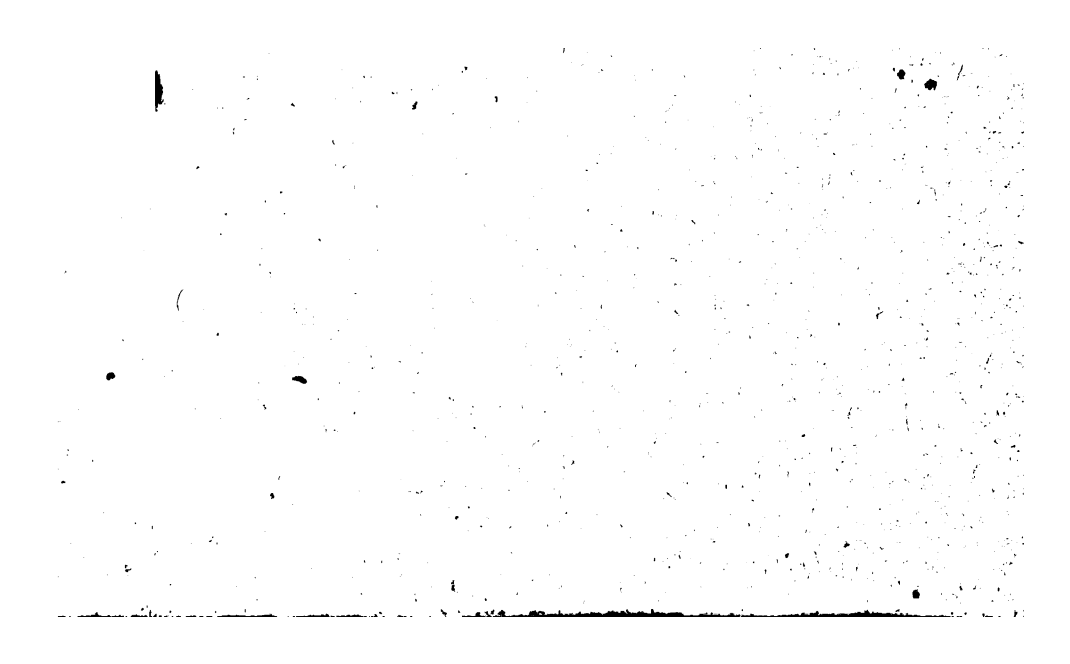

Fuller Theo

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From Dr J. A. Green.
Cecil, Richard Apr 12, 97
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Friendly Visit

TO THE

HOUSE OF MOURNING.

IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER.

Ecclesiastes, vii. 14.

Many are the sayings of the Wise,
In ancient and in modern books enroll'd,
Extolling Patience——
But to th' afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails; or rather seems a tune
Harsh and of dissonant mood from his complaint,
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above;
Secret refreshings that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.

MILTON.

FOURTH EDITION.

CHARLESTOWN:

PRINTED BY SAMUEL ETHERIDGE,

FOR THE REV. *JEDIDIAH MORSE, D.D.*

1803.

FRIENDLY VISIT, &c.

YOUR preſent affliction, my dear friend, demands ſomething more than the uſual forms of condolence. Sorrow, which like yours, cannot be prevented, may yet be *alleviated* and *improved*. This is my deſign in addreſſing you, and if I ſeem to intrude upon your retirement, let my motive be my apology. Having felt how much *better it is to go to the houſe of mourning than to the houſe of feaſting*;* Having received my beſt *Leſſons*, *Companions*, and even *Comforts* in it; I would adminiſter from my little ſtock of experience: and while I thus endeavour to aſſiſt your meditations, ſhall rejoice if I may contribute, though but a mite, to your comfort.

* Eccl. vii. 2.

Were I, indeed, acquainted with the peculiar circumſtances of your loſs, I ſhould employ particular conſiderations: but my preſent addreſs can have only a *general* aim; which is to acquaint the heart, at a favourable moment, with its grand concerns; to give it a ſerious impreſſion when *ſoftened*; and an heavenly direction when *moved*. Let us, therefore, ſit down humbly together in this houſe of mourning: If *the heart of the wiſe be found** here, your experience, I hope, will prove that here alſo it is *formed*: and let us calmly contemplate ſome momentous Objects intimately connected with it, and viewed with peculiar advantage from it.

OUR GOD is the firſt of theſe objects: with him we ſeldom form any cloſe acquaintance till we meet him in trouble. He commands ſilence now, that He may be heard; and removes intervening objects, that He may be ſeen. A SOVEREIGN DISPOSER appears, who, as *Lord of all*, hath only reſumed what he lent; whoſe will is the law of his crea-

* Eccl. vii. 4.

tures; and who expreſsly declares his will in the preſent affliction. We ſhould ſeriouſly conſider, that all allowed repugnance to the determinations of his government, (however made known to us) is *ſin*; and that every wiſh to alter the appointments of his wiſdom is *folly*; *we know not what we aſk.* When God diſcovers himſelf in any matter, thoſe who know him, *will keep ſilence before him.** *Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty inſtruct him?* How juſt was the reply; "*Behold I am vile! what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.*"†

This ſilent ſubmiſſion under trying diſpenſations, is variouſly exemplified as well as inculcated in the ſcriptures. An awful inſtance of ſin and ſorrow occurs in the family of Aaron; his ſons diſregarded a divine appointment, and *there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them; but* Aaron *held his peace.*‡ Eli, in ſimilar circumſtances, ſilenced his heart with this ſingle but ſufficient conſider-

* Hab. ii. 20. † Job xl. 2, 4. ‡ Lev. x. 2, 3.

ation, "*It is the Lord.*"* David, under a ſtroke which he declares conſumed him, obſerves, "*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, becauſe* THOU *didſt it.*"† And Job, when ſtript of every comfort, bleſſed the name of Him who *took away*, as well as *gave*.‡ Whatever be the nature of your calamity, may it be attended with ſuch an humble and childlike ſpirit as theſe poſſeſſed!

But the Sovereign Diſpoſer is alſo the COMPASSIONATE FATHER. Among other inſtances of his tenderneſs, you may have obſerved the peculiar ſupports he affords under peculiar trials. Let us mark, and acknowledge, the hand which mingles mercy with judgment, and alleviation with diſtreſs. The parents I have juſt mentioned loſt their children under circumſtances far more diſtreſſing than yours: The deſire of your eyes (if not the idol of your heart) was, perhaps, almoſt a ſtranger: you ſtrove hard to detain it, but He, who took the young children into his arms and bleſſed them, took

* 1 Sam. iii. 18. † Pſa. xxxix. 9. ‡ Job i. 21.

yours; and, taking it, seemed to say, *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;** patiently *suffer this little one to come unto me, for of such is my kingdom*† composed: *Verily I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father.*‡ "If I take away your child, I take it to myself—Is not this infinitely beyond any thing you could do for it? Could you say to it, if it had lived, 'Thou shalt *weep no more, the days of thy mourning are ended?*'§ Could you shew it any thing in this world like *the glory of God, and of the Lamb?*‖ Could you raise it to any honour here like *receiving a crown of life?*"¶

The voice of a *Father of mercies and* a *God of all comfort*,** speaks as distinctly in the death as in the birth of an infant. *A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord,* "*Refrain thy voice from*

* John xiii. 7. † Matt. x. 14.
‡ Matt. xviii. 10. § Isa. xxx. 19.
‖ Rev. xxii. 23. ¶ James i. 12. ** 2 Cor. i. 3.

*weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, ſaith the Lord, that thy children ſhall come again to their own border.** *It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of theſe little ones ſhould periſh.*'†

Is it a pious friend that has juſt yielded up his breath? The ſame voice ſeems to ſay, "Turn from him, or rather turn from his *clay*—his faded *garment*.—*He* himſelf *is taken from the evil to come;—he is entered into peace.*"‡

When the able miniſter, the exemplary Parent, or the faithful Partner depart, a conſternation often ſeizes the circles which they bleſſed. We are ſo ſtunned by the ſudden blow, or occupied with the diſtreſſing circumſtances, that we ſcarcely can hear God ſaying, "*Fear not, I, even I, am he that comforteth you:*§ I, your Father, am yet alive: I gave you your departed friend; I ſent every benefit which was conveyed through him; truſt me for bleſſings yet in ſtore; truſt me with him, and with yourſelves."

* Jer. xv. 17. † Matt. xviii. 14.
‡ Iſa. lvii. 1, 2. § Iſa. li. 12.

Whatever notions one who lives *without God in the world* may form of dying, *we* should learn from his word to regard it merely as a *Tranſlation*,—a change in which nothing is loſt which is really valuable. As ſurely as we *believe that Jeſus died and roſe again*, ſo ſurely do we believe that *them alſo which ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with him.** Taught of God, we ſhould view Loſſes, Sickneſs, Pain, and Death, but as the ſeveral trying ſtages by which a good man, like Joſeph, is conducted from a *Tent* to a *Court*. *Sin* his diſorder; *Chriſt* his phyſician; *Pain* his medicine; the *Bible* his ſupport; the *Grave* his bed; and *Death* itſelf an Angel, expreſsly ſent to releaſe the worn out Labourer, or crown the faithful Soldier. *I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, bleſſed are the dead, which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours; and their works follow them.*†

But admitting the ſtate of your departed Friend to be doubtful, yet in all caſes that

* 1 Theſſ. iv. 14. † Rev. xiv. 13.

are really so, let us cultivate honourable thoughts of GOD; let us remember the FAITHFUL CREATOR. Righteousness is his throne, though clouds surround it. Whatever he has left *obscure* we may safely leave him to explain. Let us recollect that, amidst innumerable obscurities, he hath made things *clear* in proportion as they are *important*; and therefore repeatedly urges it upon our conscience, that the door is still open to *us*;—that it is awful to stand before it *unresolved*; that we must trust him today; and that tomorrow he will equally remove our conjectures and our complaints.

Perhaps you are ready to reply, "*I have heard many such things*: and *I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul's stead*:* but my heart, and my expectations are so crushed by this blow, that I can hear nothing but "*thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound grievous; thou hast no healing medicines.*"†

* Job xvi. 2, 4. † Jer. xxx. 12, 13.

Beware, however, of falling into their ſin who *limited the Holy One of Iſrael.** There is a charge continually brought againſt man, that in his troubles, the Source and the Reſource are equally forgotten. *Though affliction cometh not forth of the duſt*,†—yet *none ſaith, Where is* God *my Maker, who giveth Songs in the Night ?*‡ Endeavour then, in extremities, to recollect an ALL-SUFFICIENT FRIEND—a very preſent HELP in trouble. HE at leaſt may add (as he does in the paſſage juſt alluded to) "*I will reſtore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, ſaith the Lord.*" Cannot the voice which rebuked a tempeſtuous ſea, calm our troubled ſpirits ? Is his hand ſhortened at all, that he cannot *bleſs our latter end*, like Job's, *more than the beginning ?*§ Is it not the Lord *that maketh poor, and maketh rich ; that bringeth low and lifteth up ?*‖ Many, whoſe hearts have been deſolate like yours, while they have looked *around*, have at length *looked UPWARD unto Him, and been lightened.*¶ A ſingle promiſe

* Pſa. lxxviii. 41.
† Job v. 6.
‡ Job xxxv. x.
§ Job xlii. 12.
‖ 1 Sam. ii. 7.
¶ Pſa. xxxiv. 5.

has afforded them not only relief, but ſtrong conſolation.

Let us, therefore, my dear friend, *turn again to this ſtrong hold as priſoners of hope: even today can he render double unto us.** Let us look to *Abraham's* God, and his encouragement is ours; "*Fear not,—I am* God Almighty†—*q. d.* I am all-ſufficient, in all caſes: I am enough; *and able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you aſk or think.*‡ I have taken away thy *gourd*, but doſt thou well to be angry? have I left nothing for thankfulneſs? this world however cannot be your *home*, nor its objects your *conſolation:* they are all too poor for the ſoul of man. *Look unto Me and be ſaved:*§—*Acquaint thyſelf with Me and be at peace:*‖ *Follow Me and you ſhall not walk in darkneſs, but have the light of life.*¶ However dark and diſtreſſing the preſent ſtate of things may appear, *commit thy fatherleſs children to my care, I will pre-*

* Zech. ix. 12.
† Gen. xvii. 1.
‡ Eph. iii. 20.
§ Iſa. xlv. 22.
‖ Job xxii. 21.
¶ John viii. 12.

*ſerve them alive; and let the widows truſt in me.'**

Still the beloved object is gone, and your heart follows it. You can ſcarcely receive counſel from infinite Wiſdom, or comfort from Omnipotence. To every fleſh encouragement you are ready to reply, '*Wilt thou ſhew wonders to the dead?—ſhall the dead ariſe and praiſe thee?—ſhall thy loving kindneſs be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulneſs in deſtruction?*'† His word repeatedly aſſures you they ſhall; and that *all that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice*;‡ but it informs you alſo, that He can do abundantly more for the living than merely reſtore their dead friends, or revive their fainting ſpirits;—it teaches you that he can ſanctify the ſeparation,—that he can give a divine life to the ſurvivor, *though dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*,§ and inſeparably unite both in his kingdom. If the Comforter could make up for the loſs of *Chriſt's* bodily preſence; yea, make it even

* Jer. xlix. 11. † Pſalm lxxxviii. 10, 11.
‡ John v. 28. § Eph. ii. 1.

expedient that *HE should go away*;* how much more can he supply the place of every creature!

May this COMFORTER, writing his word in your mind, help you to say with a confidence highly honourable to himself and his Gospel, 'My poor perishing gourd is, indeed, withered a day before I expected it;—my broken reed is gone;—but God is left,—*a father to the fatherless,—an husband to the widow,*†—*and now, Lord, what wait I for? truly my hope is in thee.*‡ Thou canst give me, *in thine house, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters,* even *an everlasting name which shall not be cut off*: § and therefore, *though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, yet I will rejoice in the* LORD, *I will joy in the* GOD OF MY SALVATION. ‖

Once more; let us endeavour, at such seasons as these, to recognize a GRACIOUS MONITOR. Whenever the Lord *strikes*, he *speaks*. Let us listen at such a time as this with

* John xvi. 7. † Psalm lxviii. 5. ‡ Psalm xxxix. 7.
§ Isa. lvi. 5. ‖ Hab. iii. 17, 18.

humble attention, yet with holy confidence, for it is the voice of a *Friend*,—a wonderful *Counsellor*. Let us with the Prophet resolve to ascend the tower of observation, and observe *what He will say unto us, and what we shall answer when we are reproved*. If with him we thus watch our dispensation, *at the end*, like his, *it shall speak*.*

God is continually raising up witnesses, and sending them in his name to *sound the alarm in Zion*. † He charges them to admonish the wise, as well as the foolish Virgins, to beware of slumbering, since the bridegroom is at hand: and when one is called away, to cry to those that remain, '*Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh*.' ‡ Some indeed, like the sons of Lot, desperately scorn the admonition, and treat it as the fear of dotage.§ Some, like those in the Acts, *are in doubt, saying one to another*, '*What meaneth this?*'—*and others mocking reply*, '*These men are full of new wine*.' ‖ But TRUTH, like a rock furi-

* Hab. ii. 1—3. † Joel ii. 1. ‡ Matt. xxiv. 44.
§ Gen. xix. 14. ‖ Acts ii. 12, 13.

only assaulted, but unshaken, remains to scorn its scorners: and, while the witnesses continue to bear a faithful and consistent testimony, God, sooner or later, appears in vindication of their integrity and his own word. Entering a careless family, he smites the first-born; and, as one that *will* be heard, calls aloud, "*Awake, thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*"*

And is it not, my afflicted friend, an infinite mercy, if, by *any* means, God will enter with such a *light*,—that he will rouse such a *sleeper?*—that, by his minister *Death*, he will arrest the attention of him who has slighted every other minister? What patience! what long-suffering! to take such an one apart; bring him from noise and occupation into the secret and silent chamber; speak to his heart; and seal the most important truths on it, by the most affecting impressions! Is it not saying, "*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I make thee as Admah?*"† Certain it is, that questions, which before only reached the ear, often now, like

* Eph. v. 14. † Hosea xi. 8.

barbed arrows, remain fixed in the conſcience —conſcience, no longer ſtifled or amuſed, diſcovers the CONTENDER, and, trembling before him, cries, "*Thou haſt chaſtiſed me, and I was chaſtiſed as a bullock unaccuſtomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.*"*

This, I ſay, is often the caſe, and ſhould it be realized in you, as it has been in that of your preſent Viſitor; if, inſtead of flying for relief to every object but God, you are brought humbly to his feet with patient ſubmiſſion, ſerious inquiry, fervent prayer, holy reſolution, and firm reliance; if, in a word, by the ſevereſt ſtroke, the *enchantment* is alſo broken,—your ſoul *eſcaped as a bird out of the ſnare of the fowler*, † and returned to its proper REST; what reaſon will you have to ſay,

Thoſe we call *wretched* are a choſen band.
Amid my Liſt of Bleſſings infinite,
Stand this the foremoſt,—"*That my heart has bled.*"
For *All* I bleſs Thee;—Moſt for the *ſevere*;
Her death,—*my own* at hand——

* Jer. xxxi. 18. † Pſa. cxxiv. 7.

But death at hand (as an old writer expreſſes it) ſhould be death in view, and lead us to conſider next

OUR PROSPECTS from this Houſe of Sorrow, as the inhabitants of a preſent and future world. Many ſuppoſe that they can beſt contemplate the *preſent* world by crowding the *Houſe of Mirth*;* their whole deportment, however, ſhews that it makes them much too giddy for ſerious obſervation: *having eyes they ſee not.*†

Look at the deceaſed, and contemplate preſent things. His days an *hand-breath*; his beauty conſumed like the *moth-fretten garment*; his cares and pleaſures a *dream*; his attainments as the *graſs* which flouriſheth in the morning, and in the evening is cut down and withereth; his years a *tale*; his ſtrength, *labour and ſorrow*. So ſoon is the whole *cut off and fled*, that we cannot help repeating with the Pſalmiſt, *Verily—every man—at his beſt* eſtate—is *altogether* VANITY,‡—

* Eccl. vii. 4. † Mark viii. 18.
‡ Pſa. xxxix. and xc.

*or a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vaniſheth away.**

Few, perhaps, reflect, when they follow a friend to his grave, that life itſelf exhibits little more than a funeral proceſſion, where friend follows friend, weeping today and wept for tomorrow. While we are talking of one, another paſſes—we are alarmed, but behold a third! There is, however, relief in this very reflection; "My friend is gone, but am I weeping as if I were to *ſtay?*—Is he ſent for in the *morning?* in the *afternoon* I ſhall certainly be called." Inconſolable diſtreſs, therefore, may ungird our loins, may waſte our hours, and cauſe us to make fatal miſtakes in the journey, but does not bring us forward a ſingle ſtep towards meeting our Friends in that ſtate, where preſent joys and ſorrows will be recollected only as the dream of a diſtempered night.

If, after many former admonitions, an Enemy ſtill urged us to climb; and, as we af-

* James iv. 14.

cended, pointed *to the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;** if our hearts have been the dupes of the vanishing prospect, and our ears eagerly heard the proposal, "*all these things will I give thee;*"† let us now hear the voice of a FRIEND, calling us, though in an unexpected way, *to commune with our heart and be still;*‡ to know, *at least in this our day of visitation, the things which belong to our peace;*§ and also what those things are which *hide them from our eyes.*

It is at such seasons as these that we more clearly detect the lies of life. It is in the House of Mourning that, what the scripture calls, lying vanities, lie peculiarly naked and exposed. Let us here examine what so lately dazzled us. What now is the *purple and fine linen*‖ that caught our eye? What is it to fare sumptuously only for a *day?* Who is he that cries, "*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry?*¶ I trust you now feel the deep

* Matt. iv. 8. † Matt. iv. 9. ‡ Psa. iv. 4.
§ Luke xix. 42. ‖ Luke xvi. 19. ¶ Luke xii. 19.

misery and utter ruin of that dying creature, who can say nothing better to his soul than *this!* You can scarcely help crying out, "What sottishness, what madness this, in a moment so interesting as life! with a prospect so awful as Eternity!"

The truth is, God speaks variously and incessantly to man respecting his prospects both present and future; but present things seize his heart, blind his eyes, stupify his conscience, and carry him away captive. Now "affliction is God speaking louder," and striving with the heart of man: crying, as he has lately in your house, "*Arise and depart, this is not your rest; it is polluted;* and, if you persist in attempting to make a rest of it, *will destroy you with a sore destruction.*"*

Our plan, indeed, is the very reverse of his: we love our native soil, and try to strike our roots deeper and deeper into it: firmly fixed in earth, we would fain draw our whole life, strength, and nourishment, from it. And here we should not only *fade as a leaf*, † but, with *every tree that beareth not good fruit, be*

* Mic. ii. 10. † Isa. lxiv. 6.

*hewn down and caſt into the fire;** did not mercy interpoſe.

We ſeldom, however, diſcern mercy in its *firſt* approach. Is it *Mercy* that tears me up by the roots?—that cuts the fibres of ſweeteſt union?—does it prune away the fineſt branches? nip the lovelieſt buds? and cover the earth with bloſſoms?—Yes, verily,—ſince the very life of the whole, often depends upon the removal of a part. Mercy will wound to heal: regard to the tree will ſtrip off its moſt flouriſhing ſuckers: the great Huſbandman will not fail to adopt the ſharpeſt means for the improvement of his choiceſt plants: *for every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*† *Though the Lord cauſe grief*, yet it is in *compaſſion*, and *according to the multitude of his mercies, for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;*‡ but ſoon or late inſtructs all his children to ſay, "*I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right; and that thou in faithfulneſs haſt afflicted me.*" §

* Matt. iii. 10.
† John xv. 2.
‡ Lam. iii. 32, 33.
§ Pſalm cxix. 75.

Let not, therefore, the change of the present scene discompose but direct us: it changes, in order to present the only unchangeable one. By thus rending the veils which men try to throw over a dying state, and discovering TEKEL* written on every creature, the most careless are often so roused, that they seem to awake and recover themselves: they appear, for a time at least, to become *wise*, to *understand these things*, and seriously to *consider their latter end*. † May this salutary impression, however, my dear friend, never be worn from *your* mind, but lead you habitually to look from this fading, to that abiding prospect, which is to be found only in the ETERNAL WORLD,—and on which it may be necessary here to drop a reflection or two.

I think you must often have remarked that the urgency and bustle of present things, not only raise a cloud of dust before our future prospects, but early beget a false principle that the *present* life is the *only one*. You must also have observed that ten thousand

* i. e. wanting. Dan. v. 27. † Deut. xxxii. 29.

falſe maxims, which daily fly through the world, take their riſe from this prime falſhood. Whereas, in fact, the preſent life, inſtead of being the *whole*, is comparatively *nothing*: a *Stage*, a *Porch*, a *Dream*, a weary day's *Journey*. What is this drop to the ocean before us? What this moment to Eternity? As a Theatre, indeed, in which God exhibits the wonders of his providence and grace; or as a Stage, on which we are to act our parts without any opportunity of repetition; the preſent ſtate is infinitely grand and important: but ſurely no greater impoſition can be put upon the Pilgrim than to perſuade him that he is at *Home*; or to make him forget and drown his eternal intereſts in ſuch a viſion of the night as Life.

Do you not, my dear friend, ſenſibly perceive this? While you ſit here, does not the cloud break, and the miſt ſubſide? Have you not already ſo realized *a better, that is an heavenly country*,* as to admire him who pitched only a *tent* here,† but ſtedfaſtly looked for

* Heb. xi. 16. † Heb. xi. 9.

*a city that hath foundations?** are you not ready *to take hold of the skirt of this Jew*, saying, *'We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you?'*†

Seeing this, you only see truths ever exhibited in the scriptures, and living principles in all who are *taught of God*;‡ for he alone can enable us to use his own discoveries; and how gracious is he, when he removes any object which might prevent our thus seeing Himself, his kingdom, and his righteousness? or whose removal may prove the occasion of our *seeking* them?

Just before the flood, there were, doubtless, among their *men of renown*,|| admired projectors; but there appears to have been but one *truly* wise man among them; one who saw and seriously regarded his Prospects. And he, *being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an Ark to the saving of his house.*§ Now such a man is the Christian. He feels *the world passing away*

* Heb. xi. 10. † Zech. viii. 23. ‡ John vi. 45.
|| Gen. vi. 4. § Heb. xi. 7.

*with the luſts thereof, but he that doth the will of God abideth forever.** 'I feel,' ſays he, 'that however finely they dreſs the pageant of this world, it *paſſeth by*;† to a creature like me, going, haſtening, ſuch an *Ark* is worth more than ten thouſand dying worlds. Let the Gay laugh; *let the deſpiſers wonder and periſh*;‡ with ſuch Proſpects before me, I *muſt* be ſerious. He that cannot lie has revealed the *terrors* as well as the glories of a future ſtate: he ſpeaks of *a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched*,§ as well as of *a fulneſs of joy and pleaſures for evermore*.‖ I muſt not, I dare not, ſhut my eyes againſt theſe awful realities. I will not ſacrifice my ſoul to a jeſt, nor miſs the ſingle opportunity afforded me, for its ſalvation. He that calls for my whole heart is worthy of it: while the things which have hitherto engroſſed it, though they cannot *ſatisfy*, I find they can *ruin* it, *I will therefore ariſe and go to my Father*;¶ to my Saviour, who has promiſed to *caſt out none*

* 1 John ii. 17. † 1 Cor. vii. 31. ‡ Acts xiii. 41.
§ Mark ix. 44. ‖ Pſ. xvi. 11. ¶ Luke xv. 18.

*that come unto him.** Yea, doubtleſs, I *count all things but loſs, that I may be found in him,*† the true ARK, the only REFUGE, which God has provided for periſhing ſinners.'

Such a man, indeed, is the *Chriſtian*, but the Chriſtian, after all, is but a *Man*. In a ſtate like this, he needs to be continually reminded of his own principles. Even the *wiſe* Virgin ſlumbers though the Bridegroom is at hand. But a cry is often made in the family, before that which will at midnight awaken the world: one like that in the houſe of Pharaoh for his firſtborn; or that ſo lately heard in *yours*. A cry, which, while it rouſes the Sleeper, fills his eyes with tears and his heart with pangs; often produces ſuch views of God, of the preſent, and of the eternal ſtate, as all other monitors would have attempted in vain.

Here then, my afflicted, but, I hope, inſtructed, friend, let us ſtudy the heavenly ſcience of gaining by *loſſes*, and riſing by *depreſſions*. Leaving the wilderneſs, like Mo-

* John vi. 37. † Philip. iii. 8, 9.

ſes, let us aſcend the mount of ſcriptural diſcovery, and ſurvey a proſpect of which his was but a ſhadow. Let us look from viciſſitude and deſolation to what alone is *incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away*;* and, in the houſe of affliction and death, let us contemplate a houſe *not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*.† How refreſhing to look from a family bereft of its companions and comforts to *Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem; to an innumerable company of angels: and to the general aſſembly and church of the firſtborn which are written in heaven!*‡ the only family which cannot be divided; the only friendſhip which ſhall not diſappoint our warmeſt expectation.

Glorious as this proſpect is, (perhaps you are ready to reply) "I have been long in the habit of viewing it very indiſtinctly. My attention has been ſo fixed on one below, that I live looking *into* the Grave rather than *be-*

* 1 Pet. i. 4. † 2 Cor. v. 1. ‡ Heb. xii. 22, 23.

yond it. My ſpirits are ſo broken, my heart ſo wounded, and my eyes ſo dim with watching and weeping, that I can hardly read what is before me, or recollect what I read. If ſerious reflection compoſes me for a few moments, I ſoon relapſe, and ſeem to loſe ſight of every ſupport. I indeed ſeverely feel what you ſay concerning the *preſent* life, but I view the glories of the *future* like a ſtarving creature, who, looking through the gate of the wealthy, ſurveys a plenty which but increaſes his anguiſh."

There is, however, this difference at leaſt between your caſes; the plenty which *you* ſee is *yours*, if you are really willing to accept it. You never received a gift which was ſo freely beſtowed, or ſo ſuited to your neceſſity, as that *gift of God*, which is *eternal life through Jeſus Chriſt*,* In order to view this more diſtinctly, let us conſider the ſufficiency of

* Rom. vi. 23.

OUR PROVISIONS—For *Wiſdom hath built her houſe, ſhe hath killed her beaſts, ſhe hath mingled her wine, and furniſhed her table. She alſo crieth upon the higheſt places of the city, 'Whoſo is ſimple, let him turn in hither;' and to him that wanteth underſtanding ſhe ſaith, 'Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled; forſake the fooliſh and live.'**

Man, indeed, is daily reminded by the Thorns at his feet, by the ſweat of his brow, and by the duſt to which he is returning, that his paradiſe is *loſt*:† but Paradiſe *regained* is conſidered rather as an Idea; a ſubject for Poetry. That book, however, which I hope you have choſen as your beſt companion in the Houſe of Mourning, like the viſion of Jacob, not only ſhews the heavens opened, but diſcovers a gracious Medium of communication and intercourſe, as it were *a ladder let down from heaven to earth.*‡ A medium ſo ſuited to the ſtate of man, that the weakeſt and vileſt, who is humble enough to take hold of it as God's ordinance; advance

* Prov. ix. 1—6. † Gen. iii. 18, 19.
‡ Gen. xxviii. 12.

a ſtep at a time; and call for ſtrength to proceed; may climb by it from Earth to Heaven.*

Are you, my dear friend, among the number of thoſe, who ſtand before God not only as ſtript of their *comforts*, but humbled under ſin as the cauſe of all the deſolations with which our fallen ſtate abounds? Open your book at the ſixty firſt chapter of Iſaiah. You will there perceive the moſt precious privilege of Paradiſe reſtored; the Creator deſcending to the condition and wants of his creature, and once more holding *communion* with him. The *broken hearted*, the *captive*, and the *mourner*, are here ſhewn One mighty to ſave and to relieve: and, that ſuch ſhould not miſtake their friend, when our Lord ſtood up in the ſynagogue to read, he ſelected this paſſage, and, having read it, he cloſed the book with ſaying, '*This day is this ſcripture fulfilled in your ears.*'† 'I am, as if he had ſaid, this Deliverer and *Deſire of nations*;‡ *the ſame yeſterday, today, and for-*

* Compare Geneſis xxviii. with John i. 51.

† Luke iv. 21. ‡ Hag. ii. 7.

ever : bleſſed are they that mourn ; for they ſhall be comforted :† bleſſed are ye that hunger now ; for ye ſhall be filled : bleſſed are ye that weep now ; for ye ſhall laugh.'‡*

I ſcarcely need obſerve that, in an addreſs like this, (a bow drawn at a venture) formal ſtatements of the different topics would be improper ; and, therefore, I ſhall not attempt to deſcribe, in their order, the various proviſions comprehended in that ſcheme of redemption, uſually termed the Goſpel. It may be neceſſary, however, to remark, that the whole is a propoſal to the *broken heart*, anſwering all its objections, and meeting all its wants : and that ſuch a propoſal will be cordially received only in proportion as this diſpoſition prevails.

As it is the *Sick* who beſt knows how to value a phyſician, the *Debtor* a ſurety, and the *Criminal* a pardon ; ſo it is the awakened conſcience alone which will embrace a conſtitution calculated to humble the *pride*, and

* Heb. xiii. 8. † Math. v. 4. ‡ Luke vi. 21.

mortify the *corruptions*, as well as relieve the *wants*, of man. If *without ſhedding of blood there can be no remiſſion*,* he, who is earneſt to obtain it, will rejoice to find it though on *the accurſed tree*: and, however the *preaching of this croſs* ſhall be eſteemed *fooliſhneſs among them that periſh*,† ſuch an one will not only rejoice in the proviſion, but magnify the means. '*God forbid that I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*'‡

Our Lord repreſents the bleſſings of his kingdom under the parable of a magnificent feaſt, which a *King made for the marriage of his Son*; but when *all things were ready*, and invitations repeatedly ſent, he points out the ruin of the world in its indiſpoſition to accept his gracious propoſal. *They made light of it*, and went *their ways!* However different their purſuits, they all agreed to reject the invitation; they began with *one conſent* to make excuſe: ſome urged reaſons, and ſome

* Heb. ix. 22. † 1 Cor. i. 18. ‡ Gal. vi. 14.

abuſed the meſſengers; but what is this more than the hiſtory of human nature in every age?*

Let us, however, my dear friend, never forget that the gate lately mentioned, though ſtrait, is *open*; and that only *unbelief* and *indiſpoſition* ſtand without. Chriſt has declared that all things are *ready*; may his gracious influence, accompanying this humbling providence, form in you a ſpiritual taſte for them! Certain I am that, whenever this is attained, his *name* will be *as ointment poured forth*;†—it will give a ſavour even to obſolete poetry.

Chriſt is a path,—if any be miſled;
He is a robe,—if any naked be;
If any chance to hunger,—he is bread;
If any be a bondman, he is free;
If any be but weak—how ſtrong is he!
To dead men life he is; to ſick men health;
To blind men ſight; and to the needy wealth;
A pleaſure without loſs; a treaſure without ſtealth.

To prepare the heart for the reception of this treaſure, as a God of order, he is pleaſed

* Mat. xxii. 1—6. † Cant. i. 3.

to uſe a ſyſtem of means; one of which I hope he is now employing for your ſouls health. I love to indulge hope, for affliction is a ſeed time; and let me freely inquire, ſince God has called you aſide, has ſpoken ſo emphatically, and you have had leiſure for ſerious meditation, do not the proviſions of the Goſpel appear new, ſufficient, and exactly ſuited to your caſe? Do you not mark that Gold which the thief cannot ſteal? that Foundation which no tempeſt can ſhake? that Life over which death hath no power? and that Peace which the world can neither give nor take away? Does not the religion of JESUS, that is ſo forgotten and degraded among men, ſtand forward now as the *one thing needful*? Does not his friendſhip appear now to be *that better part* which *ſhall not be taken away*;* and which alone can help in extremities? In the wreck of human affairs, indeed, it is that God often makes his truth appear; and cauſes his Goſpel, (like a plank thrown out to the periſhing mariner) to be properly known and prized.

* Luke x. 42.

"These are the great occasions which force the mind to take refuge in religion; When we have no help in ourselves, what can remain but that we look up to a higher and a greater Power? and to what hope may we not raise our eyes and hearts, when we consider that the GREATEST *Power is the* BEST?"

"Surely there is no [truly wise] man who, thus afflicted, does not seek succour in the Gospel which has brought *Life and Immortality to Light.* The precepts of EPICURUS, who teaches us to endure what the Laws of the Universe make necessary, may silence, but not *content* us. The dictates of ZENO, who commands us to look with indifference on external things, may dispose us to conceal our sorrow, but cannot *assuage* it. Real alleviation of the loss of friends, and rational tranquillity in the prospect of our own dissolution, can be received only from the promises of Him in whose hands are life and death, and from the assurances of another and better state, in which all tears will be wiped from the eyes, and the whole soul shall be

filled with joy. Philoſophy may infuſe STUBBORNNESS, but Religion only can give PATIENCE."*

In health and eaſe, ingenious ſpeculations may amuſe and ſatisfy us; but I think you now feel with me, that when He *takes away the deſire of our eyes with a ſtroke*,† our ſorrows are too deep to be alleviated by the mere Orator or Philoſopher; we even turn in diſguſt from him who would thus trifle with our caſe; we need a ſupport the world cannot afford. 'I faint,' ſays the wounded ſoul: 'I want an almighty arm to lean on now; yea, a very tender and compaſſionate one too; one like that of the Son of Man. I need a *merciful and faithful High Prieſt, who, having been tempted, knows how to ſuccour the tempted*;‡ that Man of Sorrows, that Brother born for adverſity, who, being *acquainted with grief*, can enter into my caſe, and commune with me in all the peculiarities of my diſtreſs. I now need one, who can quiet me on his own breaſt, and ſpeak to

* Johnſon. † Ezek. xxiv. 16. ‡ Heb. ii. 17, 18.

me with his *own voice, Weep not, the child is not dead but ſleepeth.** *Weep not, thou afflicted, toſſed with tempeſt, when thou paſſeſt through the waters I will be with thee.*† It is true, this is the land of death, but *I am the reſurrection and the life ;*‡ this is, indeed, a *dry and thirſty land where no water is ;*§ but I will lead you to *fountains of living waters :* I will *wipe away all tears from your eyes.*'‖

You are ready, perhaps, to ſay, 'O that I knew where I might find him ;' but Religion has been with me rather a caſe of neceſſity than the high privilege of communing with ſuch a comforter. I feel the miſery of living at ſuch a diſtance from my heavenly Friend, (eſpecially at this time) but want liberty to approach nearer : Could I, indeed, repoſe on the boſom you juſt mentioned ; " but, alas ! my underſtanding is clouded, my faith weak, ſenſe ſtrong, and Satan buſy in filling my thoughts with falſe notions, dif-

* Luke viii. 52. † Iſa. xliii. 2. ‡ John xi. 25.
§ Pſ. lxiii. 1. ‖ Rev. vii. 17.

ficulties, and doubts respecting a future state, and the efficacy of prayer."* Though I see very gracious proposals made to returning sinners, I tremble to venture: Death itself reminds me of transgression: My thoughts fly every where but to God.

We readily acknowledge that among other views of death, it should be regarded as the *wages of sin*.† It is also natural for convinced sinners to tremble before a Judge who charges even angels with folly. However Pride may boast, or Ignorance presume, he who measures by the standard of a law which is so spiritual as to regard a corrupt desire, will conclude with the apostle, that *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*.‡ A view of the divine character, and of his own, led not only a Publican to smite upon his breast, as the seat of apostacy and pollution, and cry, '*God be merciful to me a sinner*,'§ but so perfect and upright a man as Job to *abhor himself*, and re-

* Lady Russell's Letters. † Rom. vi. 23.
‡ Rom. iii. 19. § Luke xviii. 13.

pent *in duſt and aſhes*:* I may add that, [illegible] *we* become proficients in their ſchool, we ſhall be more ready to *confeſs* than to *complain*; we ſhall learn to juſtify God in any inſtance of his righteous diſpleaſure; and humbly own, that he has laid upon us far leſs than our iniquities deſerve.†

But while the Chriſtian, as a penitent, looks upon him whom he has pierced and *mourns*; as a believer, he looks at him who was wounded for tranſgreſſion, and *hopes*. He finds it as deſperate to doubt the *remedy*, as to deny the *diſorder*. Having formerly ruſhed headlong with the *preſumptuous*, he now fears periſhing with the *fearful* and *unbelieving*.‡ He ſees an atonement of God's own providing; he pleads upon God's own authority the merit of that blood *which cleanſeth from all ſin*;§ and by thus receiving *the record which God gives of his Son, he ſets his ſeal to it that God is true*.‖

* Job xlii. 6. † Pſ. ciii. 10. ‡ Rev. xxi. 8.
§ 1 John i. 7. ‖ John iii. 33.

Is this, my dear friend, in any degree your case? Fearful, wandering, and wounded as your heart is, does it yet discover a resting place? Instead of wishing to evade the charge of "manifold sins and wickedness committed by thought, word and deed against the Divine Majesty; is the remembrance of them grievous, and the burden of them intolerable?" Do you sincerely desire to be freed from this burden, and to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God? that heavenly communion and rest which has been mentioned? *Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!** *Behold him exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins!*† Come to him as a sinner, and touch, with humble confidence, but the *hem of his garment*, and you shall be *made whole*:‡ Wait upon him, and you shall obtain both strength and liberty; *for if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed.*§

* John i. 29. † Acts v. 31.
‡ Mat. ix. 21. § John viii. 36.

Reſpecting your ſenſe of weakneſs, let m
add that *Proviſion* made for fallen nature, co
reſponding to its various wants, is at once
character and an *evidence* of our Religion.
is a glorious peculiarity of it, that its *pro*
iſes correſpond with its *precepts*. To uſe t
language which beſt conveys its meanin
The kingdom of God is not in WORD only, *but*
ſo *in* POWER.* He who enlightens the blin
eyes, undertakes to *ſtrengthen the weak han*
and to confirm the feeble knees.† The Spi
of wiſdom and underſtanding is ſaid to be
alſo a Spirit of *might*, of *grace*, and of *ſuppli-*
cation.‡ It is peculiar to *our* Teacher that
he *enables* as well as inſtructs his diſciples:
he firſt preſents a *proſpect* of the inheritance,
then a *title* to it through his death, and to-
gether with theſe, affords *ſtrength* to riſe and
purſue it. Turn to the thirty ſixth chapter
of Ezekiel, and you will find your caſe am-
ply provided for,§ but recollect that it is add-

* 1 Cor. iv. 20. † Iſa. xxxv. 3—6.
‡ Compare Zech. xii. 10. with Eph. i. 19.
§ Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

*I, 'I will yet for this be inquired of, to do it for them.** Is any afflicted? let him pray.'†

But I must not pass by the temptation you mentioned with respect to the efficacy of prayer: you will, perhaps, too readily object, 'Here it is that I sink; I prayed earnestly for the life of the deceased; I thought at one time I saw signs of a recovery, but the event makes me fear that I was not heard, and that I have no FRIEND left now in Earth or Heaven.'

A little consideration will, I hope, shew you your mistake, and prove that a petition may be graciously accepted, when its particular object is not granted. Did not our LORD declare that his Father heard him always?‡ Are we not told that when *in the days of his flesh he had offered up prayers, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from death, he was* HEARD in that *he feared?*§ But consider, I pray you, how he was heard: Certainly not by having the cup

* Ezek. xxxvi. 37. † James v. 13.
‡ John xi. 42. § Heb. v. 7.

taken away, (a cup at which human nature, however perfect, muſt recoil) but in being accepted when he prayed; in being ſupported while he drank it; and in victoriouſly accompliſhing his grand deſign through drinking it to the very dregs.

To come nearer to our own condition, we find St. PAUL going to CHRIST for deliverance from ſome ſevere trial which he calls a *thorn in the fleſh*; he tells us that he alſo was heard, and in the ſame way as his Maſter; not by being releaſed from ſuffering, but by receiving ſomething more honourable and advantageous; namely, that *Grace* which not only ſupports a Believer through his trials, but puts a healing virtue into them.

Far removed from the holy reſignation of our Maſter, we too much reſemble in our prayers, the impatience of our children. I remember when a ſick one of mine has had ſome medicine to take, he has called loudly to me to come and aſſiſt him againſt thoſe who were endeavouring to force it down: he, probably, wondered at my refuſing to re-

lieve him; but the little ſufferer did not conſider, though often told, that he was not to be helped in that way; he did not recollect, that while I tenderly felt his cry, the very compaſſion I felt for him, and the deſire I had to relieve him, kept me from taking away the bitter draught.

The truth is (and it is a truth frequently told to us) that our heavenly Father always ſends his children the things they aſk or better things. He anſwers their petitions in *kind* or in *kindneſs*. But while we think only of our *Eaſe*, He conſults our *Profit*: We are urgent about the *Body*, He about the *Soul*: We call for preſent *Comfort*, He conſiders our everlaſting *Reſt*: and, therefore, when he ſends not the very things we aſk, he hears us by ſending greater *than we can aſk or think*.*

Is any, therefore, *afflicted? let him pray*; not only in the public ſanctuary, or in the retired cloſet, but let him conſider that there is *a new and living way conſecrated through the veil*† of a Redeemer's human nature, from

* Eph. iii. 20. † Heb. x. 20.

every ſcene of retirement or action, to a MERCY SEAT; where he *ſatisfies the longing ſoul, and fills the hungry ſoul with goodneſs*; eſpecially *ſuch as ſit in darkneſs and the ſhadow of Death.** Our very miſery and infirmity ſhould, in defect of other preachers, point out the ſeat of our relief; and direct ſuch frail and depraved creatures to the common Friend of the *weary* and *heavy laden*. Pouring into his boſom all our complaints, we at once obey his command, honor his character, and obtain his aſſiſtance: *for we have not an High Prieſt who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as are we, yet without ſin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*†

Is it not a time of need with you? endeavour, at his command, to approach with an holy confidence, for the *ſupply of all your need according to his riches in glory*;‡ and, at this

* Pſa. cvii. 9, 10. † Heb. iv. 15, 16.
‡ Philip. iv. 19.

time particularly, for the illumination and comfort of his Holy Spirit. He whom you supplicate not only *invites*, but *reasons* with you. "*If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!*"*

The religion of education and custom obtains, more or less, every where; but serious, vital, spiritual religion is *a case of necessity* with us all. We summon our forces, we ransack our stores, we *spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not*; † we look every way, and call to every thing, till each in return loudly replies, "*It is not in me.*"‡ Well, indeed, will it be, if, after all our fruitless efforts, we are brought to feel that the provisions of the Gospel are the only *bread* for a hungry soul, the only *balm* for a wounded heart.

* Luke xi. 13. † Isa. lv. 1.

‡ Job xxviii. 14.

However foreign, my dear friend, these truths were from your conſideration when we firſt ſat down together, if it ſhall pleaſe Him, who *commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs*,* to ſhine into your heart, and effectually diſcover the *exceeding riches of his Grace* in theſe proviſions; then, though *you* ſit weeping over your loſs, we are aſſured from unqueſtionable authority, that Angels are rejoicing† for your unſpeakable gain. We are certain alſo, that not only every *real* friend will cry, "*This day is ſalvation come to the houſe*‡ where we lately wept;" but that, drying your tears, you yourſelf will be compelled to expreſs your grateful ſenſe of the correction you now deplore, and ſing, with a companion and fellow-proficient in the ſchool of affliction,§

Father, I bleſs thy gentle hand;
How kind was thy chaſtiſing rod
That forc'd my conſcience to a ſtand,
And brought my wand'ring ſoul to God!

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.
† Luke xv. 10.
‡ Luke xix. 9.
§ Pſa. cxix. 67—71.

Foolish and vain, I went astray
Ere I had felt thy scourges, Lord;
I left my guide,—I lost my way;
But now I love and keep thy word.

And here, suffer me to drop a word or two respecting these

OUR COMPANIONS in the house of mourning. Society is peculiarly pleasant when we are benighted on a journey: and especially that of a citizen of the place to which we are going. It is encouraging to travel with those, who are convinced, that if *they are chastened of the Lord*, it is, *that they should not be condemned with the world.** *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:*† and here they are educating for it. Here they sit at the foot of the Cross, and receive lessons of faith and patience, of humility and temperance.

Blessed also *are the pure in heart; for they* here *see God;*‡ who never so unveils himself

* 1 Cor. xi. 32. † Matt. v. 3. ‡ Matt. v. 8.

as in ſeaſons of diſtreſs. In ſight of his character and worth, they bow before his providence, yea, truſt him in the ſtrokes; for hope is made to ariſe here, as a light in darkneſs. Here the ſpiritual Huſbandman is taught to *go forth weeping, and bearing the precious ſeed* of faith and love, penitence and prayer; aſſured *that he ſhall come again with joy bringing his ſheaves with him.** Here alſo the heavenly Scholar acquires *the tongue of the learned, that he ſhould know how to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that is weary.*† And here the true Soldier of Jeſus Chriſt is found *fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life*‡ in the very valley and ſhadow of death. He is here inſtructed to *caſt down imaginations*,‖ thoſe reaſonings which peculiarly infeſt and darken the houſe of mourning; and taking the *ſhield of faith, and the ſword of the Spirit*; he *wreſtles not only with*

* Pſa. cxxvi. 6.
† Iſa. l. 4.
‡ 1 Tim. vi. 12.
‖ 2 Cor. x. 5.

*flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers**—a mighty though secret conflict which God shall one day declare to the world; and which, when explained, will leave its most celebrated heroes *silent in darkness*.†

"*Go thy way forth by the footsteps of thy flock*,"‡ for in this house they all have left the prints of their feet. Here stood Jacob weeping over his beloved Rachel;§ and here Aaron deplored his sons.‖ Here we trace the steps of David going up to his chamber, and crying with a loud voice, "*Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son! my son!*¶ and those of Ezekiel, who, forbidden to cry, silently resigned *the desire of his eyes* to the stroke.** But enumeration is vain: hither came all the sons of God, the only-begotten not excepted, for JESUS himself stood *and wept* at the grave of a friend.††

* Eph. vi. 12—16, 17
† 1 Sam. ii. 9.
‡ Cant. i. 8.
§ Gen. xxxv. 20.
‖ Lev. x. 3.
¶ 2 Sam. xviii. 33.
** Ezek. xxiv. 16.
†† John xi. 35.

With ſuch company, is it not far *better to go to the houſe of mourning than to the houſe of feaſting* ?*—I knew one of theſe, *a man who had ſeen affliction by a rod*† like yours ;—a man who walked and wept in ſolitude, but with no expectation of being overheard. There is ſomething ſacred in grief, and we cannot liſten to its effuſions with too much candour: great candour, indeed, is here required, but, if afforded, it may procure you at leaſt, a *Companion*, as you paſs through this vale of tears.

* "*Set thee up way marks* ;‡ I deſire here to ſet them up, and to record the ſevereſt of my viſitations in the houſe of my pilgrimage. Lord, prepare me for the next!"

"I perceive I could not have properly ſympathized with a friend in a ſimilar caſe before this ſtroke. I could not have *underſtood* it.

* Eccl. vii. 2. † Lam. iii. 1.
‡ Jer. xxxi. 21.

"I have, at times, so felt the importance of eternal things, that I thought the loss of any present comfort would be tolerable:—but I had no idea how much depended on being *ready*, when the Son of Man came in such a providence."

"I feel I now stand in the right position to see the *world* and the *word*;—they both appear under aspects entirely new."

"When I find 'my joys packed up and gone;' my heart slain; the delight of my eyes taken away; when I recollect who is gone before her, who is following, and what remains for the world to offer; my heart cries, *I loathe it, I would not live always*;"*—"I thank God that *I* am also to go."

"I perceive I did not know how much my life was bound up in the life of a creature: when *she* went, nothing seemed left: one is not; and the rest seem a few thin and scattered remains."

* Job. vii. 16.

"And yet how much better for my lamb to be suddenly housed, to slip unexpectedly into the fold to which I was conducting her, than remain exposed here?—perhaps become a victim?"

"I cried, 'O Lord, spare my child!'—he did—but not as I meant; he snatched it from danger, and took it to his own home.

"I have often prayed, 'Lord, soften my heart! humble my pride; destroy my levity!' I knew enough of his way to fear the *means*; and he has, in mercy towards me, regarded my *soul* more than my *feelings*."

"I prayed earnestly for her life: duty compelled me to say, '*Thy will be done*,'—but I *meant* nothing."

"O my God, how long hast thou come *seeking fruit on this tree*?* how much hast thou done to cultivate it?—shall it still remain fruitless? shall it be cut down after all?"

* Luke xiii. 7.

'My passions forged impressions that she would live; but I now plainly perceive I am called to regard *God* and not *impressions*.'

'I have been long like one in a fever, attended at times with a strong delirium: I begged hard that I might not be bled, but he meant a cure and pierced my heart.'

'O how slender, how brittle, the thread on which hang all my earthly joys!'

'I wish ever to be asking, 'Am I ready, should he send again and take ***, or ***, or myself?' *Setting my house in order** will not make death approach sooner; but, that it will render his coming much *easier*, I feel by sad experience.'

'When I pass by the blaze of dissipation and intemperance, I feel a moment's relief. I say to my heart, 'Be still;' at least she is not left to follow these *ignes fatui*: how much better is even the grave for my T——, than *the end of these things*?'†

* Isa. xxxviii. 1. † Rom. vi. 21.

'It is vain for me to wish, as I have done, to leave the world and go to my father, that I might inquire into the whole of the case; the reasons, the steps, the issue, &c. In a short time I shall, but he says enough *now*, if I have ears to hear.'

'In the mean time, help me, O my God and Father, to recollect that I received this drop of earthly comfort from a spring which still remains! help me to feel that nothing *essential* is altered! *for with thee is the fountain of life*:* part of myself is already gone to thee, help what remains to follow.' * * * *

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

If this humble attempt to improve your affliction has been attended with any success, you will readily admit a few concluding hints with respect to

OUR DUTY in such circumstances. And one of the first, and principal duties of the state, is, as hath been expressed, to ACKNOWA-

* Psa. xxxvi. 9.

EDGE God in it. It was charged upon some that they *returned not to him that smote them*, nor *sought the Lord** in their distress. On the contrary, the clear apprehension Job had of a divine hand in his afflictions, is as instructive as his patience under them. While Grief *rent his mantle*, Faith *fell down and worshipped*; 'The Lord *gave*, the Lord *hath taken away*, *blessed be the name of the Lord*.'† Let us learn from him never to lose sight of the *Author*, by an undue regard to the mere *circumstances* of our loss. We may think and speak of the symptoms and stages of the late removal; of the physicians, of the remedies, &c. in their supposed right or wrong application; but not so as to forget that an unerring Providence presided over the whole, yea, actually *conducted* every part on reasons as righteous as inscrutable.

Whatever may appear to *us* peculiar in the sick chamber, the whole was but God's intended method of removing one, who had lived his *full* (i. e. his *appointed*) time. *See*

* Isa. ix. 13. † Job. i. 21.

*ing his days are determined, the number of his months is with thee: thou hast appointed him his bounds which he cannot pass.** Instead of fixing our attention upon means and creatures, of which we know so very little, let us turn to Him who wrought by these instruments, and merely effected his own determinations by them. *Cease from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of?*† Let not the creature hide the Creator, nor present things remain the fatal screen of the future; but, in every occurrence, mark the great Cause, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things:*‡ who numbereth the *very hairs of our head*, and without whom even a *sparrow falls not to the ground.*§

While others, therefore, are wandering without an object, and bereaved without a comforter, yea, are going to their worst enemy for relief, let us endeavour to say with Peter, * Lord, *to whom shall we go*‖ but to THEE?* Consider the great Physician as now

* Job xiv. 5, 6. † Isa. ii. 22. ‡ Rom. xi. 36.
§ Matt. x. 29, 36. ‖ John vi. 68.

proposing a most serious question to your conscience, '*Wilt thou be made whole?*'* May the language of your heart be that of the apostle's, "If by *any* means;"† then, though seemingly swallowed up of this grief, like Jonah, you shall find a resource *in* it, and finally be preserved *by* it.‡ This dart, like that which once pierced an imposthume in battle, shall bring health with its wound; and you shall be enabled, with many that are gone before you, to say, '*The Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death.*§

Duty also directs you to MODERATE YOUR GRIEF. Our heavenly Father, who *knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust,*‖ allows us to mourn when he afflicts us; he often, in his providence, calls us to it, and charges us to *weep with them that weep:*¶ but he admonishes us also of a danger on each hand. '*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of*

* John v. 6. † Philip. iii. 11. ‡ Jonah ii. 3—10.
§ Ps. cxviii. 18. ‖ Ps. ciii. 14. ¶ Rom. xii. 15.

*him.** If we ſeriouſly profeſs Chriſtianity, our very profeſſion implies, (not only a ſubjection to our Lord's will, but) that we have ſpecial reſources in our affliction; ſeveral of which have been already named: that, among other of our privileges, there is *a peace from God which paſſeth all underſtanding, to keep our hearts and minds*† through Life and Death; and that we have many reaſons for *not ſorrowing as others who have no hope.*‡ Beſides which, Chriſtians have a poſt of honour to maintain: an *high calling*§ to demonſtrate and commend: we ſhall (like the pilot in a ſtorm) be brought to our principles; and, *as ſorrowful, yet always rejoicing*,‖ ſhould prove that we have them not now to learn.

On the contrary, there is ſuch a thing as nurſing and cheriſhing our grief; employing a "buſy meddling memory to muſter up paſt endearments," and perſonate a vaſt variety of tender and heart rending circumſtances.

* Heb. xii. 5. † Philip. iv. 7. ‡ Theſ. iv. 13.
§ Philip. iii. 14. ‖ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

There is a tearing open the wound afresh by images and remembrances, and thereby multiplying those pangs which constitute the very bitterness of death itself. Our melancholy exceedingly affects this voluntary torture; it seeks expedients, and will listen to the most unjust and aggravated accusations which can approach a tender conscience respecting the deceased. But conscience should rather be concerned to repress such a disposition. It is a temptation. It desperately strives to retain what God has determined to remove: in some cases, it seeks to penetrate an abyss he forbids even conjecture to explore: and, while it unfits the mourner for the pressing duties of his station, it leads to that *sorrow of the world which worketh death** to his body, soul, and Christian character. How different and superior the sentiments of DAVID! *His servants said unto him, 'What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive, but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.' And he said,*

* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

*'While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept for: I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live; but now he is dead, wherefore should I fast?—can I bring him back again? I SHALL GO TO HIM, BUT HE SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME.'**

Present circumstances also admonish you to KNOW YOUR OPPORTUNITY, and to improve this season as peculiarly favourable for spiritual advancement. There is a *tide* in the concerns of religion; the scripture calls it the *day of visitation*,† and sends us to the *stork* and to the *swallow*‡ for instruction respecting it. Your heart is now soft, its fascinations withdrawn, and the call loud and affecting; endeavour, therefore, to take the benefit of a remedy you feel so expensive.

If, in a sense, "Smitten Friends are Angels sent on errands full of love," instead of weeping over their tombs, let us listen to the voice which properly arises from them; especially if it be our privilege to bury one who, like

* 2 Sam. xii. 21—23. † Luke xix. 44.
‡ Jer. viii. 7.

Abel, *being dead, yet speaketh*,* and who would be ready to say to his mourners, '*Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children*,† *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*,‡ and received my crown. I cannot now come to weep with you, but you may ascend and rejoice with me, where there is *no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away*.§ If you truly love me, prepare to follow me. If you earnestly wish to see me again, seek not the living among the dead, but arise, and become *a follower of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises*.‖ Take that heavenly lamp, which *shineth as a light in a dark place*? walk humbly by it *till the day dawn, and the day star arise in your heart*.¶ Haste my beloved, towards the things which *eye hath not seen*;** and, ere the eternal day break, and the present shadows flee away, *run with pa-*

* Heb. xi. 4. † Luke xxiii. 28. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 7.
§ Rev. xxi. 4. ‖ Heb. vi. 1, 2.
¶ 2 Pet. i. 19. ** 1 Cor. ii. 9.

*tience the race ſet before you, looking unto Jeſus.** How will my cup overflow to meet you among thoſe who daily *come hither out of great tribulation:* and, having *waſhed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, ſerve him day and night in his temple!*†

Embrace every method God hath recommended for maintaining communion with him, and obtaining relief from him. The various ordinances of his Houſe, the encouragements of his Word, the ſociety of his Children, and, eſpecially, Prayer. Often ſpeak to Him who *ſeeth in ſecret,*‡ and *is nigh unto all that call upon him,*§ though, with the Woman of Canaan, you can only ſay, '*Lord help me.*'‖ Not only an high commendation, but a miracle followed her requeſt. She urged it under the greateſt diſcouragements, but you have both a command and a promiſe, '*Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me.*' ¶

*Heb. xii. 1, 2.
† Rev. vii. 14, 15.
‡ Matt. vi. 18.
§ Pſa. cxlv. 18.
‖ Matt. xv. 23.
¶ Pſa. l. 15.

And, while you ſearch the Scriptures and attend the Church, you will at once be inſtructed and encouraged by marking in both thoſe footſteps which we lately conſidered. They are, indeed, not ſo explicit in the latter; but attention to the ſcriptural account of the Chriſtian character, will greatly aſſiſt you in diſtinguiſhing real Chriſtians from thoſe who, equally forward and corrupt, have at all times aſſumed their name, and mixed in their ſociety, to their grief and ſcandal.* Leaving theſe unhappy *exceptions* to their proper Judge, follow the unerring *Rule* he has put into your hand, and thoſe who walk by it; particularly, ſuch as are your companions in affliction. You will ſee them paſſing before you with not only the ſame wounds in their hearts, but almoſt the ſame words on their lips. Study their courſe; mark their progreſs; obſerve how they held his arm, pleaded at his throne, repoſed in his boſom, and magnified his truth, who walked with them in a furnace which, like that of the three children, burnt nothing but their bonds.†

* Philip. iii. 18, 19. † Dan. iii. 25.

'But who is ſufficient for theſe things?'

A fourth direction will ſerve for a reply. To improve the opportunity you diſcern, and to keep pace with thoſe you approve, SEEK DIVINE ASSISTANCE; or, as St. Paul has expreſſed it, '*Be ſtrong in the grace that is in Jeſus Chriſt.*'* If, on the one hand, Religion has vaſt propoſals to make; on the other, to be truly religious is a mighty aim, and can be accompliſhed only *through* HIM *that loved us.*† Oppoſing Omnipotence to difficulty, was their *ſecret*, who ſo glorioufly overcame a world that was not worthy of them: read their hiſtory in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, and ſee what an implicit reliance, called Faith, a *ſeeing Him, who is inviſible*, will perform. That invaluable record ſeems to ſay, '*Our fathers truſted in thee: they truſted, and thou didſt deliver them: they truſted in thee, and were not confounded.*'‡

We are, indeed, called to *aim* and to *act*, and have the greateſt promiſes annexed to the

* 2 Tim. ii. 1. † Rom. viii. 37.

‡ Pſa. xxii. 4, 5.

endeavour; but are as frequently reminded that *we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves*, but that *our sufficiency is of God.*† Christ encourages no one to advance on the ground of his own strength, any more than on that of his own *desert*: he is as jealous of the power of his Arm as of the merit of his Blood. He admitted infirmity and misery to be pretented as a *complaint*, but never as an *objection*. I have observed it not uncommon, for this to be a season of peculiar temptation; a spiritual enemy stands ready to defeat every spiritual opportunity: but our help is near, and our example, in such conflicts, excellent. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice: and he said unto me, 'My GRACE is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'* May you be enabled to add with the apostle, '*Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me.*'‡

Again, that you may seek cheerfully this assistance, REGARD YOUR ENCOURAGEMENTS. To recover our alienated minds, and gain our

† 2 Cor. iii. 5. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

confidence, God meets us in a way ſuited to our neceſſities, and to our fears. Reſiſt, as the vileſt temptation, any doubt of that *Good Will to Man*, which was ſung at the Redeemer's birth. What hath God not done in order to commend his love? By every expreſſion of tender concern, he, in the perſon of a *Man of ſorrows*, invites the guilty, the weary, the trembling and the tempted to come unto him; aſſuring them that he will neither *break the bruiſed reed*, nor *quench the ſmoking flax*.*

If *God is love*,† "Chriſt is God ſtooping to the ſenſes, and ſpeaking to the heart of man:" ever ſaying, 'Look to my croſs, take my Yoke, and lean upon my Arm, and ye ſhall find reſt.' He ſought the houſe of mourning to comfort the ſiſters of Lazarus: he met a widow following her only child, and, *when the Lord ſaw her, he had compaſſion on her, and ſaid unto her, 'Weep not.'*‡ May he meet you at this time, my dear friend, with conſolations which none but himſelf can afford:

* Matt. xii. 20. † 1 John iv. 16. ‡ Luke vii. 13.

mid-riven, at the very grave, shall that saying be brought to pass, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'* Let those fear, who despise our heavenly *Friend*, our *Prospects*, *Provisions*, *Companions*; and sense of *Duty*: God with us, and all things in God, is light in darkness, life in death. The words which revived him, who styles himself *your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*,† remain to cheer a solitude darker (if possible) than his: 'Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.'‡

To conclude:—The late event solemnly repeats its Author's charge, "BE YE ALSO READY."§ Your Friend is gone: your following is certain: it may be sudden; it may be next. But should it take place this night, and find you provided with nothing better for the change than the miserable subterfu-

* 1 Cor. xv. 54.
† Rev. i. 9.
‡ Rev. i. 17, 18.
§ Matt. xxiv. 44.

ges of the profane, or the ſcarcely leſs miſerable ſupports of the formal, what an alarm (if you are not left to the moſt affecting deluſion or ſtupidity) will it occaſion! What an awful tranſition, to paſs from the SAVIOUR to the JUDGE! without love to him; without even an acquaintance with him; unwilling, unreconciled, unrenewed! And to Him who has ſo often invited you, warned you, and, at times, affected your conſcience with the truths we have been conſidering!—— What a ſubject for eternal reflection, '*You would not come to him that you might have life!*'*

God forbid, however, that this ſhould be *your* caſe! I only ſuppoſe it, leſt it ſhould; and it is too common to render the ſuppoſition improper. From ſuch a danger we cannot be too ſecure; and, therefore, having lately ſeen how ſoon *the night cometh when no man can work*,† let us ſeek *today*, in the redemption which is in Chriſt Jeſus, that peace and ſafety which you muſt be conſcious can never be found OUT of it, and which it may be too late to ſeek tomorrow.

* John v. 40. † John ix. 4.

Some things belonging to our important change are wifely hid from us; nothing, however, is more plain than that it is *near*, and therefore demands our moſt ſerious attention: that it is finally *deciſive*,* and therefore warns us to watch againſt thoſe errors, which eternity cannot rectify; and, that the hour is *uncertain*, and, therefore, calls us to ſtand prepared. With our *loins girded*, and our *lights burning*, may we thus wait for our Lord!

Impreſſed with ſuch views, I have often wiſhed to take the afflicted by the hand, and lead them to a Reſource their paſſions have obſcured. I have wiſhed them to ſee that the Chriſtian hope is then moſt alive and full of immortality, when every other hope periſhes. Theſe wiſhes, and the requeſt of a friend, (who was ſolicitous to obtain ſomething of this kind more compendious than he had yet ſeen) have drawn from me ſome imperfect hints. Imperfect, however, as they are, like a few words, preſented by the

* Matthew xxv. 46.

road's side to the eye of a weary traveller, they may afford you some present direction and relief. And should He, who is pleased to employ the feebleſt means in his greateſt work, conduct you by them, (though but a ſingle ſtep on your way) towards a *Morning without clouds*—a *Houſe* without *mourning*, the ſervice of your affectionate Friend will obtain an high reward.